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THE

MORAL MISSION OF OUR COUNTRY.

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TWO DISCOURSES

DELIVERED BEFORE THE UNITARIAN CHRISTIANS, OF CHARLESTON, S. C.

ON SUNDAY, JULY 3D, 1853.

BY

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DISCOURSE I.

THE

MORAL MISSION OF OUR COUNTRY,

WITH REFERENCE TO THE WORLD.

DISCOURSE I.

Ye are a peculiar people, called out of darkness into marvellous light.—1 Peter, 2: 9.

Who can tell all the influences of which he is the recipient, or of which he is the radiating centre? If a man is a world in miniature, in a still broader sense is a nation a world in miniature. It becomes a people to know, if possible, the history, condition, prospects and tendencies of the institutions which control them.

What, then, are the moral aspects and relations, and what appears to be the *moral mission* of our country?

Never, at any previous period of the world's advancement, was the mutual dependency of nations so obvious as now. The numerous civilizing agencies of the last century have been gradually, yet rapidly, uniting and blending the great interests of the governments of the enlightened world. Every prominent measure, affecting favorably, or otherwise, the welfare of the people of any government, is observed, if not felt in its operations, by the whole circle of civilized nations. Commerce, in this later age, has been at once the incentive and the agent of scientific research, by which such arts have been invented, as change essentially the relation of every people to every other.

As a result, we discover an activity of mind and desire for progress, to which nothing similar can be found in the annals of the world. On every side there is commotion, and in many quarters fear and trembling. Great experiments are in contemplation, and the wisest of the wise dare venture no prophecies as to the complexion which affairs will assume during a coming generation.

To know our own moral position we must observe that of the nations of Christendom. Look, for a moment, at the present attitude of Europe. Britain, whose possessions extend around the globe, with her extremes of prodigious wealth and wretched poverty, her nobles and her beggars, her charities and her oppressions, her glory and her shame, gradually adapting her government to the demands and increasing power of an enlightened people, still retains her stupendous military force, and scarcely seems to know whether her authority is strengthing or weakening, whether her throne is more stable, or whether public opinion is not daily undermining its foundations.

Russia and Austria, by a vast military power, holding in subordination the Polish and Hungarian elements of revolution, have millions of serfs and subjects ready to enter upon every bold and hazardous experiment, which may offer to relieve them from an oppression, which strives to reduce them to the veriest barbarism.

Italy, with Rome, once the seat of the mightiest power on earth, now only relieved from revolution or anarchy by the overshadowing force of a foreign government, and the Pontifical throne still sitting over the crater of a social volcano, liable every hour to burst forth in burning fury, and consume every symbol of spiritual and monarchical authority.

France, for a moment silent under the fierce frown of a daring usurper, but with restless millions eagerly awaiting some fresh moving of the waters, when they may

embark upon any sea of troubles rather than wear the chains now imposed upon them by a tyrant. Temporary repose may be secured; but all is uncertainty and fear. Permanent peace is not expected. Change must soon occur; but what change it is impossible even to imagine.

Such is the picture of European affairs at this day. A vast population struggling and trembling after the passage of successive revolutions, with the prospect of still successive revolutions, now hoping and now fearing, and scarcely knowing whether most to hope or most to fear.

Look, then, at our own condition and contrast it. For three quarters of a century we have been steadily increasing in territorial extent, in population and commercial influence. There being few or no restraints on the diffusion of knowledge, science has been exploring, art inventing, wealth accumulating, and facilities daily multiply for intercommunication,—and this almost bloodlessly, peacefully, and with popular intelligence constantly augmenting. Yet, while enjoying peace, we are not to overlook the fact, that while extending from a few thinly settled States, along the Atlantic, into an united family of populous commonwealths, covering the continent from one great ocean to the other, we have passed through the ordeal of two wars—which though brief, may, perhaps, be termed fierce and sanguinary wars—one with our mother-land, and one with our neighboring republic in the southwest.

On the whole we have abundant cause for congratulation, and for gratitude, having enjoyed blessings unequalled by those of any people on the globe. We might justly take up the Hebrew prophet's exclamation, "What nation is there so great? *He* hath not dealt so by any people."

But, whilst we are duly grateful, it becomes us not to be vainly boastful. While encouraging most ardent hope, let us not indulge blind confidence.

I am well aware it is expected that the preacher is to search out the dark side of every subject, in order that he may find a topic for pious exhortation. But it is indulging no mere pulpit cant to declare, as a principle, that as all that gives permanent value to individual character is *moral* excellence, so the only true basis of *national* greatness is *moral* power.

All that can give stability to the best devised civil institutions is moral character and moral worth. This is the only reasonable deduction from philosophy and history, as well as the Divine dictate of the Christian religion.

In our day, we say much of missions. We make the term *mission* one of marked significance. We say every man has a mission; every institution has a mission; every government has a mission. Let us inquire what is the *moral mission of* our country? In view of the extent of our territory, the productions of our soil, the variety of our climate, our inexhaustible resources, and the freedom of our institutions, it seems to be the mission of our country to furnish to mankind an example of *moral power* and *moral progress*—peaceful power, and peaceful improvement.

Yet some, and not wholly without cause, doubt our capacity to fill this sublime mission. They apprehend that we do not improve in wisdom as we improve in wealth; that we do not increase in virtue as we increase in influence; that patriotism does not keep pace with party spirit; that religion does not keep pace with railroads; that moral worth does not keep pace with magnetic wires; and they are ready to adopt the warning words "We must educate! we must educate! or we must perish by our own prosperity." This suggests a truth entitled to profound reflection, namely, that what is needed, is not simply *to educate*, but to educate into manly independence of thought—to educate into the universal duty of self-knowledge and self-reliance. For we know and see, that men may be edu-

cated into the defence of illiberality, persecution and despotism. Men may, with the most abundant appliances of mental culture, refinement and taste, be educated with no comprehensiveness of thought, and no enlargement of the affections. With all the means of mental accomplishment, men may be educated as the most contracted and virulent partisans, or the most intolerant and unrelenting bigots.

But, not pursuing this idea now, let us inquire what is there to be feared or hoped for, at present, from the prevalence of party spirit? In our country, political influences affect every man, in some measure, in all his relations. They affect him as an individual, and a social being; they have a bearing upon, and perform a part in developing the intellectual, moral and religious character of all interested in them.

The history of nations, testifies that party spirit has occasioned great calamities. On this point there would be ground for apprehension among us, were there in operation no corrective tendencies, neutralizing and overruling evils. Some seem to fear that we may lose both the spirit and the institutions of our fathers by the increasing distance between our times and the times which "tried men's souls."

Whilst anxieties like these are not entirely unfounded, we discover that there exists still a strong sentiment of reverence for the fervent patriotism and self-sacrificing devotion, of the early fathers of the republic.

Not long since, you will remember, an eloquent patriot who escaped from the tyranny of Austrian and Russian power, was welcomed as the guest of our people. He appealed to their principles and their sympathies, their devotion to liberty, and their indignation against despotism. In breathing thoughts and burning words, he told the sad story of his country's woes. He endeavored to lead our government to the adoption of a new policy which would have involved us in the present revolutions and impending battles of Europe. Indeed, no effort was spared to

weaken the attachment of our people to a pacific policy—to enlist their sympathies—to secure their aid, and almost to stir up the fierce, the revengeful, the more ungovernable of human passions.

But all failed to shake the popular reverence for the purest, holiest sentiments of Christian brotherhood, inculcated by our fathers. Neither government or people has been willing to descend from the lofty moral eminence which our nation has gradually gained. True, we have sorrow for the oppressed of every land, in Europe. We have sympathy for their sufferings, a home for the refugees, bread for the starving, and wide arms to give a welcome embrace to all who seek an asylum on our broad, free, blessed shores.

But our government and our people have virtually said—we hear your appeals, we are not blind to your trials, we have helped, we do help, we are helping you now even more than you imagine; but we cannot descend from our high place of universal observation to become the *warlike champion* of *one* nation. We are not living for ourselves; but, encompassed with a cloud of witnesses, we are the polar star in the political heavens to guide the laboring barks of an hundred nations. Our mission is a moral mission, and we must use *moral weapons*. We are speaking courage to the world's ear, and awakening courage in the world's heart.

For four thousand years the world has been waiting, hoping, and longing with anxious soul, for an example of self-government, universal intelligence, free conscience, and moral power,—giving stability to character, and inspiring the human family with faith,—and we believe that it is ours to offer that example.

Help do you ask? Have we not aided you? What voice was it that stirred the first impulse in your bosom, and kindled the patriotic flame on the altar of your hearts? Was it not the voice of American liberty?

What moved Poland and Greece to struggle to be

free? Was it not the sunlight of our institutions beaming over on their shores? What agitated Austria? What preserves bright hope in Italy? What has impelled France in her repeated efforts and repeated failures, and what now is the sole beam of light which breaks through the gloom of her temporary depression—what but the example of the American Union—the *moral sun* which God is holding up to illumine and guide the nations, to freedom, to knowledge, and to peace?

The rich islands on our own hemisphere, in the Carribean sea, where do they look for relief from their burdens, but to the resistless moral power of our example? The whole sisterhood of God-blessed but man-cursed nations in South America, where is their hope of ultimate deliverance but in the prospect of our permanency and progress—by the extension of our commerce, carrying the golden line of enlightened liberty around through the nations of the globe, and along that line, one day to send an electric current which shall dissolve the iron of every crown, and sceptre, and throne forever?

We are Americans, but we are also Christians. We are republicans, but we are also brothers of mankind. We are living, not only for ourselves, for a nation, or for the present only. We are living for posterity, for the future, for all our race who may succeed us on the earth. The existing nations of the earth! we love them all; but we cannot by becoming the special champion of one, weaken our resources for the world's help. True, we have once been crucified, but we have been crucified for the world's salvation. We have once been buried in sorrow, and tears, and blood, but we have risen to be the resurrection and the life, to the nations of the earth.

This, is the voice which our government and people have uttered, and which testifies at once to the existence of regard for justice, a patriotic devotion to our own institutions, and a philanthropic regard for the welfare of mankind. It testifies to the existence of a moral senti-

ment, and the consciousness of our *moral mission*. Easily as the people may at times be agitated, and violent as party spirit may at times become, there are always some calm, judicious mentors, unaffected by extraneous commotions, who raise their word of warning, and whose voices are not unheeded. Three quarters of a century more have now passed, since the signing of what has been styled "the most important document ever issued by uninspired men;" and yet their memory, with that of the great, virtuous, and world-renowned Washington, is embalmed among the holiest recollections of the living generation.

By all these encouragements, by recalling considerations which mitigate existing evils, I am not pretending to allege that there is no greater room for improvement, and that there are not occasions for some anxiety.

Notwithstanding the ordeals through which our institutions have passed, and from which they have emerged, like gold from the crucible, purer for the trial, yet the exalted moral eminence we occupy in the observation of the world, the real grandeur of our moral mission to the nations of mankind, are by no means appreciated and remembered as they should be.

We have perils to encounter, and we must neither conceal nor disguise them; and while such vital interests are involved, where are we to look for a dispassionate, paternal, reconciling and admonitory voice, if not to the altars of our Christian religion—the altars of human love and universal peace. We have individual ambitions, sectional jealousies, party strifes, and sectarian divisions; we have misguided zeal and morbid conscience. These are some of the evils we must encounter, and of the perils we must guard against.

Our own confidence in ourselves furnishes no infallible warrant of national immortality. Neither faith in our past success, nor our inherent vitality, can secure the permanence of our institutions. All human history fur-

nishes no more striking instance of unfaltering faith, than that which the Hebrews had in their own stability. That their national institutions, their temple and religion, should stand and triumph, and reign unrivalled in the earth, they did not for a moment doubt. Yet the exact spot on which their temple stood cannot be determined now, so completely has that monument of their power been swept away. The Mohammedan crescent now glistens over the dome from which once floated the royal banners of Judah, and the remnants of the race are found in every continent, in every nation.

It is the same with Pagan nations, and the same with Christian nations. There are allusions in the New Testament, and other Christian records, to Christian communities once existing, where, as far as we can determine, Pagan or Mohammedan authority now sways an undisputed sceptre, leaving no vestige of the faith of the crucified Nazarene.

We are, the wisest and best of us, but men, and neither angels nor gods; and all our achievements, like ourselves, must bear the mark of fallibility.

Institutions we have, social, political and religious, of the value, the necessity and expediency of which, there is, and of necessity must be, difference of opinion. But, as minds vary with bodies, as mental capacities vary with physical features, why may not all opinions be entertained with undoubted honesty, and be presented with earnest manly modesty, and be considered calmly in the spirit of just concession?

Why may not every improvement and experiment be suggested freely, if possible, tried fairly, and the result successful, or unsuccessful, be acknowledged generously? Why may not all, on every side, listen patiently, and examine candidly, act honestly and concede manfully? Then, action being in every instance squared and regulated by that well styled golden rule, "do to others even as ye would that others should do to you," there need be

no discord, which may not be harmonized, no clashing sentiments which may not be reconciled, no various experiments which may not co-operate.

Acting in such a spirit, the result would and must be, change where change is needed, improvement where improvement is required; and in all and over all, individuals and institutions, natural Christian developement, progress and enjoyment. *Patience* there must be, both in thought and action; and without patience, concession, peace and improvement, are alike impracticable and impossible.

Could the conscript fathers, the illustrious framers of that solemn declaration, the proclamation of which tomorrow will commemorate—could they have pierced the dim vista of the future, and looking forward have foreseen the glory of our country—could they with the seers eye have discerned the passions and jealousies which now exist and jeopardize the grand national union, which is the great anomaly in the history of nations, and the admiration of the enlightened world, they would have recorded a rich testament of precious words to be opened now, and read by the assembled nation. Appealing solemnly to our common memories, trials, enjoyments and hopes, they would remind us of the just concessions and reasonable compromises which they made, and also of the conflicting opinions, prejudices and interests which they reconciled. They would recal us to sacred memories—memories reaching back to the period when our common ancestors braved the perils of the ocean, the savage and the wilderness, to find "freedom to worship God." Hallowed memories of that hour when they pledged together, life, fortune, and sacred honor, in a cause which demanded and which received the sacrifice of peace, of property, and blood. They would appeal to us by our common language, common laws and interests—interests extending over our continent, connecting with the nations of the civilized globe, and looking forward to remote posterity. They would appeal to us as reverential children, and as

loving brothers, to remain united in one unbroken circle of linked liberty, and trust, and love.

It is a solemn and fearful responsibility which we incur. Let each man persist—as some reformers and theorists of our age do—in exalting self-conscience, which is often nothing more than self-interest, prejudice, and pride of judgment,—let each one exalt this rule of imperfectly enlightened individual conscience, as an infallible standard by which to test the civil and social institutions of our country, and how soon may the ruins of our government lie scattered round us, and we be ready to take refuge from the horrors of anarchy, in tyranny or barbarism. The political sun which now illuminates the world, would then be eclipsed forever. On the stormy sea of life, mankind would then be left without a bow of earthly promise, or an anchor of earthly faith. Similarity of interests, community of laws, of language and of religion, all these, could then afford no criteria for the future. For in the possession of all these incomparable blessings to an unparalleled degree, *we* should then have perished, and the dark pall of oblivion would shroud together, our national memory and man's earthly hopes. Consider the immense stream of humanity pouring in upon us from the four quarters of the globe; from poor down-cast famine stricken Ireland, on the west, to wall-surrounded, mind-fettered China, on the east of the other hemisphere. These strangers, yet human brothers, are spreading by tens of thousands over our broad and goodly land, to find the blessings of knowledge, liberty and peace. It is our's, in this fruitful and heaven-adorned asylum, to receive them all with a brother's welcome, and share with them all, the common heritage of God our Father, till their own lands shall cease to be prisons, and become peaceful abodes of Christian men.

We are truly "a peculiar people, called out of darkness into marvellous light." We now see something of the true grandeur of our *moral mission* as a people. The

religion of the future is looking up to us, and the liberty of the future is looking up to us. Poor wounded groaning liberty is now looking toward us with yearning heart and tearful eyes, as the exile looks towards the home of his love. Poor priest-wronged, church-bound, crucified religion is now looking up to us, as the suffering saint looks towards the tomb, as the gateway to immortal glory.

Let us guard well our sublime and holy trust. Should the unrighteous hands of political ambition or religious bigotry, ever for a day, succeed in removing the ark of our covenant of civil and religious freedom, may worse than Assyrian calamities afflict the plunderers, till our heavenly treasure be restored.

Should the genius of human liberty ever be driven from our shores, like Noah's dove, may she find no rest for the sole of her foot, till she return and find a glad people ready to receive, to cherish and to love her. The rule conservative of all good, may be summed up in a single sentence. Let each one, as an American, as a man, and as a Christian, live true to himself, that is, to his knowledge and his privileges. He who thus lives true to himself, will live true to his fellow-man, his country, and his God.

Let us live thus truly, for we see—

> "There is a mighty dawing on the earth,
> Of human glory—dreams unknown before,
> Fill the mind's boundless world, and wondrous birth
> Is given to great thought.
> On every side appears a silent token,
> Of what will be hereafter—when existence
> Shall become a pure and sacred thing,
> And earth, sweep high as heaven."

DISCOURSE II.

THE

MORAL MISSION OF OUR COUNTRY,

WITH REFERENCE TO CHRISTIANITY.

DISCOURSE II.

Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free.—GALATIANS, 5: 1.

As to every intelligent being, so to every nation, the Creator appears to assign some work, and to grant to each the incentives and means, to discover and perform that work.

Among other problems, which appear to be given *us*, to solve—the mission of our country and government being a moral mission—is that of union and liberty *in religion.*

Can there be liberty of conscience, freedom of speech, and unity of action in religion?

In no nation yet, as the records of seventeen centuries demonstrate, has entire liberty of conscience been found to co-exist with unity of action among nominal disciples of Christianity. From the fact that government has recognised no preference of one over another, the necessity of mutual toleration among the sects—for it has only been toleration and not charity—has led some in other countries, to attribute to us as a people, much more virtue than is justly ours.

A well known British writer, himself a theologian, in speaking of our institutions, says: "It is hardly possible for any nation to show a greater superiority over another,

than the Americans in this particular have shown over us. They have fairly, completely, and probably forever extinguished that spirit of persecution, which has been the employment and curse of mankind, for four or five centuries. Not only that persecution which imprisons and scourges for opinions, but the tyranny of incapacitation, which by disqualifying from civil offices, and cutting a man off from the lawful objects of ambition, endeavors to strangle religious freedom in silence, and to enjoy all the advantages, without the blood, and noise, and fire of persecution."

Partially true as this is, you readily perceive how far it is over drawn. Place by its side the following declaration from a late number of a Roman Catholic periodical, published in our own country: "Religious tolerance is a heresy, and no Catholic can for an instant tolerate it. Every Catholic must profess religious intolerance or cease to be a Catholic. The essence of this religious intolerance is expressed in this article of faith—"Out of the Church, there is no salvation." "It follows therefore, that where *religious* intolerance must always and everywhere be right, civil tolerance may be proper to-day and not to-morrow—right in one country and wrong in another." The same writer then proceeds to show where unlimited toleration may be advantageous to the Church—namely, where the government professes atheism, paganism or a false religion.

In China, England, or the United States, where a false religion prevails, it may be beneficial to the Church, that there should be unlimited toleration.

On the other hand, where the true religion, that is, the Roman Catholic, controls the government, as in Italy or Spain—"intolerance on the part of the State becomes a religious duty"—for "the advocacy of new doctrines would disturb the public peace."

You perceive from this doctrine, openly advocated at this day, in our own country, by a religious community,

equalling in numbers any one of the various Churches, how far our government is from extinguishing completely and forever, that *spirit* of persecution, which has so long been the dishonour of Christian sects.

We perceive that the liberal spirit of our civil institutions, has *not* by any means extinguished, but by protecting all in the exercise of their religious sentiments, thus far, has only *restrained* the spirit of persecution.

Indeed, though liberalizing influences have diffused among the *people* a liberal spirit, yet, many of the clergy of Protestant Churches, the leaders or guides of denominations, as far as their actual proceedings will warrant an opinion, are as destitute of genuine charity, as intolerant of religious opinions varying from their own, as in any previous period of Christian history. In many of our social circles, the lines of exclusion are drawn on sectarian principles, and not unfrequently in some of our communities, certain *religious* sentiments are made the ground of political action, in electing candidates to office.

No one who reads the weekly publications of the religious press, can easily mistake what sort of *spirit* actuates its directors. The uncharitableness of the religious press, is a by-word even among political partisans.

Lawyers, physicians, and opposing politicians, have always been accustomed, more or less, to meet, consult, deliberate, and act together. But a few years since a number of clergy of several Protestant denominations, assembled in London, to form what they styled an Evangelical Alliance. The world was moved at the amazing spectacle, and it was thought by some, that the "Kingdom of Heaven" was indeed "at hand." Yet what was the first act of that world-surprising assembly. It was, to frame a *creed* excluding from the Alliance, not only more than half of all Christendom, namely, the Roman Catholic Church, but also, in express terms, excluding several Protestant denomina-

tions, embracing probably one-fourth of the Protestant world.

But what has been the issue of that assembly and that platform? Almost since that time, or for three or four years past, we hear nothing of the *Evangelical Alliance.* It has died a natural death—expired almost as soon as born, and Bishop Hughes, had he recalled the fact, might have enumerated this, among the evidences of what he styles "The decline of Protestantism."

But praise to the Supremely Good, all truth is not inclosed by the walls of Roman Catholic Churches, nor confined in Protestant creeds. There are other agencies operating, than religious partisans, and sectarian denominations, And it is here, under the protection of our government, under the guidance of our civil institutions—as all appearances conspire to indicate, that the problem of *religious* liberty is to be solved. That theoretical and practical religion, are to be reconciled. It is for our country and our citizens to prove practicable, entire liberty of conscience, and entire unity of action, freedom of judgment and unity of spirit.

As in the name of liberty, the sternest tyrants have mounted to the throne of despotism, so in the name of religion, through ages, have been perpetrated the most inhuman and ungodly deeds. In the name of zeal for the Christian faith, have been performed enormities, which would be deemed cruel even among barbarians. It can then, scarcely be a matter of astonishment, if some be found, who will express their serious doubts, as to Christianity having been a blessing to the world. But we see that mind itself, that which allies the creature to the Creator, and is in man, the image of the Deity, may be distorted into the image of coarse brutality. Talent, genius, the loftiest faculties of man, may be perverted into instruments of the lowest, basest, and most unmanly uses. Christianity has been both misapprehended and misused. Can chris-

tianity inculcate the most Godlike mercy, the most unlimited benevolence, and the most universal brotherhood, and still lead practically to intolerance, hatred, and barbarous cruelty! The indisputable facts, afford conclusive evidence of some fundamental misunderstanding or misapplication.

Need we travel far, or speculate profoundly, to detect the essential mistake? Is it not obvious enough that the point of misunderstanding has been, that of striving for an *uniformity of belief*, which man should never have expected, and which Christianity does not contemplate?

Churches have made the chief requirement an agreement of interpretation, instead of purity of character, and the practice of benevolence. They have made Christianity only a *scheme* adapted to an exigency in the remotest past, and a contingency in the remotest future, instead of *principles* adapted to the present, and to every condition, and every action of every rational being. It is thus, that Christianity has become an external and dead form, rather than an internal and living spirit, diffusing itself through, and extending itself over, modifying, transforming, and regenerating all things, which require to be changed, transformed, or regenerated.

But many changes have occurred, transformations numerous are in actual progress. During the seventy-seven years, since that memorable day of which to-morrow will be the anniversary, we have spread the myriad wings of commerce, and visiting every clime and every race, we have returned laden with the treasures of fraternal charity, as well as the luxuries demanded by an affluent civilization. We have discovered that there are as St. Paul declares—"in every nation those who fear God and work righteousness"—and that "God is no respecter of persons." Still more, by the vast facilities of intercommunication, we see our government, like the great orb of day, spreading the shield of its protection over the most opposing religions among men.

Some few are startled from their sectarian composure, by learning that a heathen temple containing its heathen Gods, is erected on our Western coast. There being now, as variously estimated, from thirty to fifty thousand Chinese in the State of California, where they have erected an edifice for their own worship.

Thus, under our protecting laws, stand in equal freedom, side by side, the Christian Church, the Jewish Synagogue, and the Heathen Temple. Shall we utter complaints or indulge fears? Where then is our faith, in the divine truth, and subduing power of our religion? Is Christianity endangered by the proximity of an idolatrous worship? We despatch missionaries to subvert the religion of the Pagan, and shall we dread results, when, instead of shrinking from us, the Pagan comes to us and challenges investigation! It is true our Christian brother of Britain sends the Gospel to China, but he enforces it with guns. He offers them bibles with the alternative of bullets, and sends them preachers accompanied with powder. He invites them to the Kingdom of Heaven, but the foretaste of its glories, he gives in the ecstacies produced by opium and rum. He tells them of Christian Saints, and gives them examples, in drunken sailors and brutal soldiers. The Chinese Emperor had learned something of Christian history, when he said—"I want no Christianity in my Empire, for these Christians whiten the soil with human bones, wherever they go." It should not be amazing, if his Majesty, had deemed it his duty, to send us some missionaries to teach us, according to his view, some lessons of charity, and convince us of the virtues of humanity and peace.

Some of the sternly disciplined leaders of sectarianism, who exercise a feeble faith in the inherent power of truth, appear to dread this latitude of civil liberty, which protects, even in a Christian land, the practice of a Heathen worship.

But the multitudes have less distrust of goodness and of God. They feel that in Christianity there is a Divine element of truth which can never suffer by comparison with Heathen error, and they see that our government thus far in its operation, is like the Deity, who causes his sun to shine on the ignorant and wise, the evil and the good. The mass of men, though attached to the systems and churches of their childhood, are yet interested, as all observation testifies, as much in the advancement of society, as in the organism of their Church. They love man more than they love their creed; they study universal truth, more than their prescribed doctrines; and they labour more for the advancement of Christian liberty, than for their sectarian success.

As a nation, we experience an unexampled degree of material prosperity, and it is true that in the multiform activities, we do not always find a due regard to religious agencies and religious principles.

But this indifference is not emnity,—it is not even opposition. Railway companies may build costly depots rather than splendid churches, but they are strengthening the principle of united social action. They may increase the percentage of their dividends, but they are also increasing the sympathies of a divided people, and blending the interests of separated communities. Every car rushing over city and county lines, and recognizing no State limits, is a herald of good tidings, a harbinger of peace, a proclaimer of good will. The lines of iron network, far and wide extending through the atmosphere, are electric nerves by which the whole nation thrills to the same impulse and vibrates to the same touch, and through which millions may sympathize, from occident to Orient, from the pole to the Equator.

These inventions of art, and material agents, are not enemies of religion. They are mighty moral forces. For by extinguishing distances we are destroying differences

—by bringing people nearer to each other, we obliterate the lines which have divided them—by joining their social sympathies, we weaken their religious prejudices.

To men and women who daily enter the same doors, travel in the same cars, reside in the same hotels, and sit at the same tables, the rumblings of pulpit thunder soon loose their terrors, and priestly denunciations are soon regarded as harmless outbursts of venerable fretfulness. The complaining of a spirit of restless exclusiveness, declining of old age, and unhappy even in its departing hours, as a righteous retribution for making others miserable while it lived. I would not be understood as predicting the speedy advent of a millennium of national love, and brotherhood and glory. I would neither overlook nor underrate the obstacles yet to be surmounted, by the benevolent spirit of Christianity. For there is still existing, as we have seen, a domineering spirit of Church authority, Protestant as well as Romanist, which, if armed with civil power, would soon stifle all free thought, and check all outward progress which might be deemed incompatible with religious tyranny.

Still more, there is a servility to public prejudice, an obsequiousness to fashion, and a time-serving dread of popular shadows, which must be displaced by the inspiration of a strong sense of human dignity, a free, firm, consciousness of manly independence, before permanent and rapid progress can be made, in the real liberty of the Gospel.

But, with a republican government, well established, and now growing venerable by years—with liberty of conscience and liberty of speech unrestrained by violence —with foreign commerce and domestic enterprize—with a common language, a common literature and a free press —with benevolent unions of every form, having in view no political nor sectarian designs, but moral objects, social improvement and mutual aid, uniting men of all par-

ties, classes, sects and religions—with all these, potent agencies in free and successful operation, spiritual tyranny and church exclusiveness cannot hope for immortality. Their days are numbered, and union and brotherhood must triumph.

In the rapid and sanguinary revolutions of Europe, from despotism to liberty, then back from republicanism to monarchy, many of the unhappy millions may be distrustful and discouraged in the cause of truth. They may be unable to determine whether the present aspect of affairs, is but one of the vicissitudes of an eternal revolution, which, in the history of nations, must always mark the changing fortunes of mankind—or, whether it is only the precurser of a mighty convulsion which shall shake the continent. A solemn calm, with darkly gathering clouds, before the eruption of volcanic fires, now burning and gathering strength in the bosom of the people —but which, in a devouring torrent, shall one day sweep away, every vestige of venerable tyrannies, preparatory to the renovation of the social heavens and social earth, for a new, better and more enduring condition of the European race.

But with our peaceful security, unparalleled freedom, general intelligence, commercial relations, and lofty position before the world, we clearly see, that our mission, is a *moral mission*. If to any people on earth is indicated by Providence a work to do, it is clearly ours, to solve the problem of religious liberty and Christian union. To embody and exemplify the alliance of religion and morals, to reconcile practically and forever, the *two* great commandments, duty to God and duty to man—love to our father and love to our brother—Divine worship and human fraternity.

The final conflict between spiritual authority and spiritual freedom has not yet been fought. The victory of free thought has not yet been secured. To some of its

auxiliaries in our land and age, we have now adverted. Church despotisms, both Romanist and Protestant, feel the reins of power over human conscience gliding rapidly from their reluctant hands, and in voice of lamentation, they are bewailing the ungodliness of the age. It is only an age of doubt, they tell us; an age of faithfulness, an age of gross impiety. But I would tell them that having eyes, they see not that it is their own stolid infatuation—that this is an age of unexampled energy, and benevolence, and beneficence, and faith in the power of goodness, rather than of plans, schemes, articles and confessions. That the world is moving while they stand still, and that the motion of the time is not backward, but onward, and pacific and humane. That the watchwords of our country are union and brotherhood—the very heart of the Christian philosophy, the very standard from the sacred lips of Jesus—"By *this* shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."

Yes, it is here that the sun of righteousness is to reach the zenith of its earthly glory. If not here, in this land where every religion is protected, where every conscience is held sacred, where no rack, no stake, no scaffold can intimidate—where no church, no creed, priest or preacher can interpose earthly authority between the soul and its Creator—if not here, then explore the globe and tell me where. Consider the present and presage the future, and tell me when and where, the problem of religious liberty can be resolved? Tell me when and where, opinion unrestrained, and co-operation in unity of spirit, can be practicable or be possible. The truth has been declared, the decree has gone forth. The angel of a free faith stands with one foot upon the land, and one upon the sea, of this last born hemisphere, and affirms in the name of God, and of human welfare, that the terrors of religious tyranny shall be here, no longer.

It is said of the brave reformer of the sixteenth century,

that he then blew a blast which shook all Europe. But that blast was blown for only a partial emancipation of the soul from spiritual chains. For by his own hostility to his laboring brethren, the reformer soon discovered, that with all his bold advocacy of private judgment, he meant by freedom, no more than a change of masters—and from that day till this, the reformation, though leading indirectly to the best aspects of the present, has been directly, little else than an exchange of Roman Pontiffs, for Protestant Popes.

Luther was only the Moses to lead to the confines of Canaan, which he saw from Pisgah, but not the Joshua to conduct Israel up fully, into the rich land of promise.

In the way of independent investigation of Christian truth, there is a tyranny of Protestant Church systems, extending its hideous arm into the most sacred privacy of social relations, which is as formidable to the timid and unheroic searcher, as the racks of a Roman inquisition, which so effectually extinguish the evil of heresy.

But superior to the spirit either of Romanism or of Protestantism, there is a spirit of Christianity—whose heavenly aspect I would gladly recognise in the heart of any human brother, whether found in a Romanist Cathedral or a Protestant Prayer Meeting.

We see now some of the potent forces which are at work, destroying divisions, and harmonizing sections, societies, and the interests of individuals.

The only method remaining to perpetuate religious exclusiveness, is to stop steam cars, take down telegraphs, silence the press, and destroy the newspaper. For every observer must perceive, that railroads, electric wires, a free press, and a free literature, are the natural necessary uncompromising and eternal enemies, of self-complacent and uncharitable sectarianism.

This day, completes seventy-seven years since our patriot fathers proclaimed the charter of *civil* freedom, under

which, at this hour, we live and prosper. But we have yet to hear proclaimed, the declaration of the world's *religious* disenthralment. Give us but the pacific policy, the material prosperity, the scientific discoveries, benificent inventions, and harmonizing Christian researches of seventy-seven years more, under the protection of our independent government, and the work is done. In this hemisphere spiritual tyranny shall have perished, sectarianism will have died, its history will have been recorded, its epitaph written, the human mind will be free, and God will reign, supreme sovereign of the soul. Three quarters of a century more of a *pacific* policy! Yes, it must be, if at all, it must be in *peace* that the problem of religious liberty is to be resolved. War disorders all, revolution confuses every thing. Literature, sculpture, painting, music—all the harmonizing, refining and elevating arts, are unpatronized, suspended, often crushed in war. The resources of the nation are then turned in a wrong direction, and employed to uncivilize society. Our own country, directly or indirectly, within the last twelve years, has expended in war, a sufficient amount of money to have purchased all the territory she has acquired, and besides this, to have built a college in every city, perhaps in every country of this broad Union, affording each a handsome perpetual endowment, by which every child now living in this land might, as far as capable, have been liberally educated—to say nothing of the loss of human life and human happiness, which no words can describe, and no figures calculate. Such are the painful trials to which we are subjecting our Christian faith, the peculiar message of which, proclaims peace on earth, and good will among men. Both the war and the expenditure may have been necessary and inevitable, yet in this nineteenth century of enlightened Christianity, all such expenditure appears to indicate the passing strange short-sightedness of human action. The religious mission of our country,

the power of our religion itself among ourselves, manifestfully depends upon our peaceful policy.

Surely there is a glorious day yet to come, and though we may not, the generations who follow us, will see and enjoy it. Let us cherish grateful memories this day, of the noble deeds and virtues of our departed fathers, as we would be gratefully remembered by those who shall succeed us.

Now may each of us, and all, enjoy the benediction of the God of our fathers, who is our God, and the God of the eternal future.

1917

THE

MORAL MISSION OF OUR COUNTRY.

TWO DISCOURSES

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